Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation Launches Stay in Play, a Global Grant Program to Keep Young Athletes in the Game

Descrizione

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COMUNICATO STAMPA â?? CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

Three-year initiative offers up to $25,000 per athlete to remove financial barriers preventing kids from playing the sports they love

LOS ANGELES, June 24, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? The Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation today officially opened applications for Stay in Play, a three-year global grant program designed to eliminate financial barriers that force young athletes out of the sports they love. The announcement follows Luka DonÄ•iÄ?â??s acquisition of Vanoli Cremona as part of an ownership group that has relocated the professional basketball club to Rome.

Over the next three years, the Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation will award grants of up to $25,000 USD to 77 young athletes aged 12-15 from around the world. Each grant is designed to cover the costs that most often create barriers for participation â?? coaching or training, equipment or gear, travel expenses to train or compete, or club, league, or program fees.

â??When I was a kid growing up in Ljubljana, all I wanted to do was run to the outdoor court behind my apartment to play basketball. It was my peace place,â?• said Luka DonÄ•iÄ?. â??Iâ??m so sad to see kids walking away from youth sports because of circumstances outside their control. Play changed my life, I know how quickly dreams can disappear without the right opportunities. Thatâ??s why Iâ??m so passionate about Stay in Play. I want to make it easier for young athletes to keep playing the sports they love.â?•

Addressing a Critical Gap in Youth Sports

Stay in Play targets young athletes ages 12-15, when dropout rates hit their peak. Research shows that most young athletes quit sports by age 12, not because theyâ??ve lost interest or talent, but because the financial strain becomes too much. Stay in Play is designed to step in during these critical years to

make sure young athletes can continue developing their skills, building confidence, and experiencing the joy of sport.

â??Financial barriers shouldnâ??t decide whether a young athlete gets to keep playing the sport they love,â?• said Lara Beth Seager, CEO of the Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation. â??This isnâ??t about finding the next generation of professionals. Itâ??s about every young person who has found something they love, and whose journey is at risk because of money. Luka created Stay in Play to make sure they donâ??t have to walk away.â?•

Global Reach, Flexible Support

Applications are open today, June 24, and run through August 20, 2026, for young athletes in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. The program supports athletes across 176 sportsâ??from basketball and soccer to gymnastics, swimming, track and field, and beyond.

Each grant is intentionally flexible because every athleteâ??s barriers are different. Funds can cover:

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â??Every athlete knows what they need better than we do,â?• Seager added. â??Weâ??re trusting them to tell us, and weâ??re committed to making it possible.â?•

Part of a Broader Mission

Stay in Play builds on the Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundationâ??s broader mission to transform youth sports culture. Since launching in December 2024, the foundation has published Inside Youth Basketball, a landmark research report examining the differences between the US and Balkan youth basketball ecosystems; developed Total Hoops, a research-backed coaching curriculum for youth basketball in partnership with the Search Institute; and partnered with the Aspen Instituteâ??s Project Play to examine structural barriers in youth basketball across North America.

â??Stay in Play represents immediate action while we work on long-term systemic change,â?• said Seager. â??Weâ??re committed to helping the kids who need support today while we work to address broader challenges.â?•

How to Apply

Applications for the first cohort of Stay in Play athletes are now open at lukadoncicfoundation.org/sip and will be live through August 20. Young athletes ages 12-15 in eligible countries can apply directly, with support from a parent or guardian.

The first recipients will be announced this winter.

For more information about Stay in Play and the Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation, visit LukaDoncicFoundation.org or follow @LukaDoncicFoundation on social media.

About the Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation

The Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation was launched in December 2024 with the goal of ensuring that youth sports are a joyful, enriching force in the lives of kids around the world. For more information on the

foundation, the â??Inside Youth Basketballâ?• report and the â??Total Hoops Approach,â?• or to get involved with the Foundation, please visit LukaDoncicFoundation.org, and stay up to date on Instagram (@lukadoncicfoundation), X (@LD77Foundation), and LinkedIn (Luka DonÄ•iÄ? Foundation).

Media Contact: media@lukadoncicfoundation.org

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